

Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

no. 1

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PAPER OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION (IWMA)

FIGHT REPRESSION NOW

BRITAIN, FRANCE, SPAIN, PORTUGAL.
GERMANY, GREECE, IRE, HOLLAND, DENMARK,

With May Day upon us once again it is perhaps worth recalling that the first May Day strikes back in the 1880's were over the eight hour day. With increased automation the total production output per worker must have risen astronomically since then but most workers would count it a poor wage if their was no overtime.

Clearly, standards of living do not rise in pace with production any gains have had to be fought for and we have to continually struggle to stop them being eroded.

We as Syndicalists see no value in reformist demands such as "the right to work" minimum wage stops, productivity deals but instead, aim at the real revolutionary goals, i.e. ABOLISHING THE WAGES SYSTEM and DIRECT WORKERS CONTROL. By workers control we mean not just a share in how we produce something but total control i.e. how we produce, what we produce and if we produce certain things at all.

By this the immediate producers themselves would have the chance to create by their own labour and leisure their own progress and determine its rate and direction. Self determination would proceed from the base and work for necessities could transcend itself in a rational and efficient manner toward work for personal satisfaction.

New Portugese strong man spinola sweeping into power with the catchwords of Freedom and Liberty, has threatened to suppress any anarchy which might emerge.

Across the border, 'Franco's secret police, are "discovering" cell after cell of anarchists to fill up their political prisons. The spanish fascist regime, which has tortured and killed more of its own people since it came to power on the blood of the civil war, than any european regime in history, only survives through repressing all opposition to it, whether it takes the form of economic demands, nationalist separatism, or civil or religious liberties.

Just across the water from ourselves. The Dublin government of farmers, lawyers and businessmen, all great upholders of freedom and liberty, although they often seem to confuse these qualities with privilege. Have sought to make a scapegoat of the Libertarian movement.

The 'Free State' which just like Spain and Portugal, exports the cream of its young people to pay for its own mistakes, thinks that by arresting its idealistic youth and offloading of all the bombings, bank raids etc which have been disturbing the peace of Dublin on to them. That these activities will cease.

The Government in Dublin, Belfast and London with their combined armies and police are not able to solve the Irish problem. It can only be done by the Irish people themselves. In the meantime all members of 'New Earth' and other Libertarian organisations lie in nick.

A defence committee is being formed
New Earth address is 112 Thomas St.
Dublin 8

ABOLISH
WAGE
SLAVERY



MILL MILITANTS

Discontent is growing again in some of the north west textile mills. The leaders of the National Union of Textile and Allied Workers (NUTAW) appear not to be carrying out the policy of shop floor representation, which had been forced upon them by the militants in the campaign for shop stewards in textiles.

It is now over a year since the policy of mill representation was officially accepted by the union, and only a few mills have got them. At the next meeting of the Oldham branches of (NUTAW) on April 27th. the union's militants will be pressing for swifter implementation of the policy and also emphasising the need that reps. be elected rather than appointed. As one militant told me, "If we allow the union to pick our representatives, we might just as well let the management organise them". The union bosses work very close with management in this industry and it is reported that Joe King, General Secretary of NUTAW, sits in on meetings of the Courtauld's directors, it is also a fact that the union has shares in the combine. Mr. King, we may add, depends on communist and left wing support for his place on the T.U.C. general council.

The textile unions generally let their members down while the three day week was in force earlier this year. Few workers got overtime pay for Saturday working and operatives in the Rochdale area were forced to work New Years Day by their union. The unions failure to consult the members about working New Year, was attacked in letters in the local press. And later when some of the more militant weavers refused to work Saturdays without overtime pay, the other textile unions failed to back them.

There is in fact considerable criticism of these textile union officials in the Oldham and Rochdale mills, and this is something which is not reduced by the continued high handed treatment these virtually self appointed leaders hand out the membership. At Oldham, a legitimate request that members of N.U.T.A.W. be told the terms of an agreement in which Jim Browning, National President of NUTAW and secretary of the Oldham branch, had a house bought for him out of union funds, has been brushed aside by the union executive. In the same way, allegations of sharp practices and an admitted breach of the union rules by the President of NUTAW's Rochdale branch, Albert Hilton, has been swept under the carpet by the Rochdale executive committee, and the matter has been "left on the table". The committee significantly however has not asked for the complainant to produce evidence to back up

his allegations, as expected our fellow travelling National Secretary Joe King has refused to intervene in this matter.

One thing about our union is that there is no risk of ballot rigging, because ballots are not fashionable in the National Union of Textile & Allied Workers. The union in fact, never seems capable of organising a full ballot of the membership like most unions, and in any case all the officials have all got their jobs for life.

North West Workers.

The Campaign for shop stewards in textiles was started in May 1971 by a group of mill workers which included several libertarians. It resulted in the sacking of several comrades, in which all the above mentioned union officials collaborated with the employers. Never the less the local publicity which resulted from the campaign forced the union officials to pay-lip service to the principle of mill representation. A booklet about this struggle is available from.

Brian Bamford
46, Kingsland Road, Rochdale, Lancs.
Price 7p. (Post Free).

Are there reds under the bed?

Just before the General Election, the newspapers were full of adverts sponsored by Aims of Industry, which supports "free enterprise". Aims has spent £500,000 on its recent campaign to convince people that Britain's economic difficulties are caused by trade unionists, 'anarchists' and 'wreckers'.

However, you may ask, who is exactly behind Aims of Industry? who are these public spirited citizens who look for reds under the bed.

Aims was set up in the 40's "to advance and promote industrial prosperity". It's founders Lord Perry of Stock Harvard, chairman of Fords, J. Arthur Rank, Sir Felix Pole, head of A.E.I. and Garfield Weston, who was a Tory M.P.

The composition of it's present decision making council are as follows. The president is Sir Ian Lyle, director of Tate and Lyle, chairman Sir John Reiss of Associated Portland Cement. Other members of the council are R.W. Dean, Pearl Dean and Sophronion, P.L. Fleming, United Newspapers Rothersey Trust, W.R.B. Foster, Enfield Rolling Mills, Gannolox, M.I.M. Holdings, London Brick Company, J.P. Hourston Anchor Cable Co. British Insulated Callenders Cables. F. Taylor, Taylor Woodrow (chairman)

Don't trust the boss

The board of directors of Norton-Villiers-Triumph are continuing to play ducks and drakes with the Meriden workers who, in an attempt to save their jobs have blockaded the transferr of jigs, tools and components to the former B.S.A. factory at Small-Heath Birmingham. The N.V.T. bosses intend to concentrate production of the Triumph-Trident motor-cycle at Small-Heath at the expense of the Meriden workers jobs. They will then be able to sell the Meriden factory and make a quick killing.

While the local union bosses and Labour m.p.s were bleating about government aid and N.V.T. chief Dennis Poore was paying lip-service to the idea of a workers-co-operative at Meriden; the Small-Heath management were secretly having new jigs and fixtures fashioned directly from old components; using the old trick of setting one lot of workers against another.

Already 100 new machines have been turned out at Small-Heath, and Poore is now coming the heavy on the Meriden workers. He has accused them of having caused a loss of £4.75 million through their occupation of the factory and the blockade, and also of a possible loss of £40 million in future exports. He has also slapped a writ on the mens leaders over the occupation of the factory, whilst at the same time saying that there might be a future for the co-operative as a sub-contract base. A classic example of the stick and carrot principle.

While all this is going on, Anthony Wedgewood-Benn, Jack Jones and Bill Lapworth south-midland organiser of the T&G.W.U. have been meeting to consider a government grant for the Meriden venture.

While they are about it, they should take note that £4.8 million of public money has already been put into N.V.T. in order, as was explained at the time, to create a healthy motor-cycle industry, and not as has happened, to destroy the livelihood of a whole community.

Industrial Notes

British Leylands Cowley managements vendetta against militant shop stewards provides a smokescreen for their more serious intentions; the introduction of the stopwatch and slide-rule into the Cowley assembly plant.

The 1971 wage agreement which abolished piecework had helped to make work more bearable on the assembly line. Now the purpose of this agreement from the managements standpoint seems to have been to provide a convenient base for the introduction of the Industrial Engineer. The function of these people is to speed up the assembly line to the highest pitch compatible with human movement, obviously at the expense of human health, especially amongst the older workers.

British Leyland at the moment invest only half as much per worker as Fords, if, as seems likely, they receive in the near future a large sum of money from government sources, whether as a loan or public investment, it should be made clear that some of it is to be spent on improving the working conditions of the assembly line worker and not on expensive timepieces to screw still more sweat and profit out of each man.



FORD

Fords: following the recent decision by a small majority to accept the firms pay offer within stage three; the lads at Halewood are taking a leaf out of at a strokes book, and are out to reduce the working week-only permanently-and not just when it suits the bosses.

For the last month the night shift at Halewood assembly plant have not turned up for the friday night shift, using the traditional direct action approach of Merseyside which won for them the new-year holiday two years ago.

**Free the
Three!**



The Midland Region of UCATT has produced a badge for supporters of the Shrewsbury pickets in conjunction with the North Wales Defence Committee. Priced at 50p for 20 bulk order terms available they can be had from K. Barlow UCATT, Gough St, Birmingham 1.

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THE LUMP

AND THE UNION

In 1972, building workers fought a long and hard official strike over demands for a £30 for a 35 hour week. But it soon became apparent that the real struggle was not so much about wages, as for the abolition of the lump. As the strikers picketed site after site they encountered and realised just how much this system of exploitation had taken hold of the industry. Although this was clear to the rank and file, the leadership of the unions and most of the union organisers, either could not see this or would not.

While union members and their families were suffering the hardship of a 12 week strike, many of the self-employed and labour-only subbies were receiving far more money than the unions were claiming from the employers. This system of payment of a lump sum per day, or by results has meant rushed and shoddy workmanship. Those who accept this employment, receive no sickness benefits, no guaranteed wage and work under unsafe site conditions. The whole industry and the community at large suffers because the lump discourages employers and local authorities from taking on and training apprentices in the skills of the industry. Even the all powerful State loses, for although these men are supposed to pay their own taxes, evasion is easy. But this growing band of men have no use for the union and have been blinded by the 'fast buck' during a boom period for the industry. It is, Laing, McAlpine, Wimpey, Tayler Woodrow who have profited by this system of sub-contracting.

In this profiteering the union leadership at national level have done little to curb the lump, and have encouraged some large firms to continue it's use.

When members of the then Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers employed by Laings on the St. Thomas's Hospital site in London in 1970 came out on strike against the use of lump labour by a firm of subby's called Whelan and Grant, the union made the dispute official. However in the third week of the strike and after two meetings between Laings, Whelan and Grant and the A.S.W. general secretary George Smith and two executive members, the official strike was called off. The union agreed that Whelan and Grant remain on the site provided that they be allowed to recruit them into the union and that the firm comply with the Working Rule Agreement. The striking carpenters, all members of the A.S.W. were either sacked or transferred to other Laing sites where there would be little opportunity to organise.

The Construction News quoted two of Laings directors as saying "This was a device to defeat militant leadership. For the first time something active has been done against these elements instead of usual stonewalling. This was achieved as a result of a combination of the contractor and the top union leadership".

An agreement between the unions and the employers ended this April whereby the unions will take no official action against the lump. In the intervening period nearly 600 firms have joined a register of firms. They will operate the Working Rule Agreement and eliminate self-employed labour from their sites.

An agreement has been reached between the unions and the employers to set up a new negotiating body which will work a new pay structure and a pension scheme. Both sides feel that the new register and the proposed legislation will eliminate the lump. However this remains to be seen.

George Smith general secretary of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, has said that they will rid the industry of these practices, but from past experience building workers cannot expect much from their unions. In fact the impression union members are getting is that the executive of U.C.A.T.T. will be satisfied with legislation that prevents tax evasion plus an agreement with the large companies whereby the self-employed and labour-only 'cowboys' are joined up into the unions by the firms themselves. O'Hara's who do work for the Greater London Council have already offered to join up some of his men and pay their contributions to the union. If this happens on a large scale there will be an anti-union 'fifth-column' within the union ranks who will side with the union leaders and support their submissive co-operation with the employers against the militants in the union.

What is needed is action against the large firms who use sub-contractors. Union members cannot rely on their executives for support in this struggle, but will have to do the job for themselves. For what is needed is a strong rank and file organisation, and a determination to battle against the subbies and the lump. It is only strong organisation that turns the building industry 'jungle' into reasonably safe and human place in which to earn a living. Without it, it is dangerous and an insult to the dignity of man. The lump, in spite of the high earnings that can be got, is making the 'jungle' an even wilder place.

PETER TURNER.

SYNDICALIST ACTION



Syndicalists want the workers to run their own industries, therefore it is logical for us to advocate means which depend upon the responsibility and initiative of the workers. It would be foolish to let control pass into the hands of a political minority and to allow them to decide our struggles for us. While others run the show, you'll never learn to run it for yourselves.

Authoritarians, of all varieties intensely dislike the syndicalist methods of struggle-Direct Action. This is because they fear the working class will rely on their own self-activity rather than look to the 'leadership' for direction.

In fact, the forms of struggle which syndicalists propagate are those to which the workers turn when their battles have been betrayed by the union bureaucrats.

Syndicalists have developed various types of direct action. These are the strike in all its forms, the boycott and sabotage.

Industry cannot operate without labour. Consequently the greatest weapon of the workers is strike action. However, strikes have been developed by Syndicalists to a high degree of sophistication. We've got more up our sleeves than the simple walk-out strike.

Generally, the stay-out strike is the one in which workers can suffer the most because most disputes are unofficial those involved don't receive strike pay from their union which has its funds invested in capitalism.

Syndicalists use the tactics of striking on the job. Of these the 'work to rule' is the most widely known.

Thousands of rules and regulations are made by the employers and the state to govern the running of industry. Many of these are unused or unknown, their place being taken on the job by common sense and daily working experience. When French railway workers were forbidden by law to strike syndicalists were delighted to show them how the law should be obeyed.

The rules relating to the railways were carried out to the letter. One regulation demanded that the driver should make sure of the safety of every bridge before crossing it. So, every express train stopped at each bridge for a safety check and the expresses ran late. Don't forget to examine every bolt and rivet brothers and sisters!

If orders are obeyed strictly confusion results and production grinds to a halt. In order for the process of industry to run smoothly it is essential that the commands of management are ignored to a large degree. Authority must be flouted. If we carry out the bosses every whim chaos will result.

An amusing case of this kind of action was that of the IWW members in the U.S.A. working in a salmon canning factory. They stuck the labels of the most expensive cuts of salmon on the cheap cuts and the labels of the cheapest type on the best quality which then went to the working class districts.

Another kind of action is rolling strikes, where different sections or departments strike at different times. The management of course does not know where or when this will be. The departments which are still working make up the wages of those who are on strike. Recently this tactic has been used in Italy (see Italy 1969-70). with great cost to the employers.

These tactics can provoke the bosses to try tougher tactics in reply - like a lock-out. To this threat the workers reply should be that of occupying the factory or plant. If you stay in the factory scabs can't be brought in to work the machines. Also, it shows that the workers are in control of the situation at the point of production.

Here it must be noted that it is only a short step from occupying the work-place to that of running it under workers control without bosses.

When once we have to point to what the French did in 1936 or the Italians in 1920. We can now see that workers in Britain are taking an active interest in the good syndicalist methods of combating the capitalist class.

If we use these tactics in our struggles it will be possible to build autonomous class organisations in which there'll be no room for bureaucrats, and that won't dole out a pittance of strike pay. Then, we'll be on the way to really challenging this rotten system under which we are condemned to live.

R. M.

SWF

National Secretary.
BCM BOX SWF
London WC1V 6XX.



Refuge for battered wives

Early this March two women with eight children between them turned up at Manchester Womens Centre after having been first battered, then turned out onto the street by their husbands.

The womens centre could not cope with this number of people at their own premises, so it was decided to occupy a large empty house in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

With some help from sympathisers, helpful neighbours and well-wishers, things are now reasonably comfortable for the families; hot-running water etc. In fact it is a lot better than some of the homes run by the social services who seem to organise more on the lines of a military barracks.

The womens centre are now attempting to raise enough money to buy the house and turn it into a permanent hostel for women and children who have been turned into the streets to fend for themselves.

The policy of the social services is to urge these women back home, even when it is known that they may have to face further violence. Although the social services are continually sending women round to the house in Chorlton, to be put up, the council has made no offer of assistance, financial or otherwise.

The latest news is that a woman has made an offer to put up the money for the house and negotiations are proceeding. However there is still need for money and goods such as blankets furniture, household goods etc. If you can help in any way contact: Womens centre 218 Upper Brook St, Manchester I3.

This was a clear demonstration of direct action getting results while officialdom bumbled. These women did not go down on their knees to council and social workers begging for accommodation they knew that empty houses were there, and with the help of people from the womens centre they helped themselves.

On the first shift back at work following the recent, miners pay victory, another kind of price was paid, toward the cost of coal-getting, a collier checking 'the jacks', itself a safety procedure was killed in a roof-fall. This was not an isolated event, upwards of a hundred more miners can be expected to share his fate within the following twelve months. Two hundred other miners will feel the first pangs of the crippling lung-disease pneumoconiosis, and numerous others will suffer injuries of varying degrees. This in the industry in which safety precautions are most stringent and are respected by both management and men.

The 'Building Industry' a so-called healthy occupation, will witness two hundred funerals this year. Despite the declining number of jobs it is the only major industry in which the accident rate is increasing. One building worker in five hundred suffers a serious accident each year.

There are several important factors which contribute to this appalling situation. The main one is the change-over in monitoring building projects, previously it was done through stringent price control of both materials and labour by the site-agent. This unfortunate individual and his subordinates, instead of supervising the actual construction, spend most of their time juggling with figures and wrangles over pay with the labour force.

The resultant bad feeling destroys the mutual regard between the various grades of workers, one of the first impacts of which is that safety regulations go by the board. Specialist groups of sub-contractors tear down safety scaffolding, hurl surplus material from roofs and steal each others equipment all in order to save time on which their wages are based.

Clerks of work and safety officers only appear on sites to rationalise the situation after part of the building or a member of the workforce has fallen to the ground.

The chemical process industry has its own aids to unhealthy living. The process whereby your raincoat is proofed will also produce fumes which may shorten the time that you can wear anything but a shroud. Constantly reports are brought out on health dangers of particular substances years after workers have been exposed to them.

New materials mainly plastic, are being continually introduced into the work situation, often without adequate testing for health hazards. Anomalies abound; In some cases the actual production of a material is fairly strictly controlled healthwise, whereas when